

Monterey County
The Herald

Adult education programs in Salinas brace for huge hit

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Salinas Union High School District administrators are gearing up to slash the budget of its adult education program — again.

Salinas Adult Education is poised to lose about \$1.5million in funding for the upcoming fiscal year, as administrators attempt to balance the budget for the district.

It would be the second major cut the program has received in the last few years. The program budget went from \$4.5million in 2009-10 to \$3.5million this fiscal year. For 2011-12, administrators estimate the budget will be about \$2million.

That means about four fewer teachers in English as a Second Language classes, four fewer for GED classes, four fewer for parent education and three fewer for programs for adults with disabilities.

In all, the program would drop to 18 teachers, from 34 teachers.

Randy Bangs, director of alternative education, points out that the district is talking about positions, not specific people.

"No program is targeted to be eliminated," he said. "The reductions are across every program, they're all being reduced."

Late last year, district officials considered placing a parcel tax on the ballot that would help make up for some lost funds. But after hearing the presentation from the consultant who had drafted the proposal, the board of trustees opted not to pursue a tax measure at this point.

Even if the board had taken the tax route, it would not have avoided the upcoming cuts, Bangs said.

"The parcel tax would not

have come before we needed to make the reductions," he said. "That would have occurred after any recommended reductions."

The district is offering retirement incentives to adult ed teachers, and until those who want to take it step forward, the district won't know how many positions need to be eliminated, Bangs said.

The Monterey Peninsula Unified School District also cut its adult education program significantly, but there are no more cuts expected for the upcoming year — unless the state's situation changes dramatically.

"We hope to continue to be intact for next year," said spokeswoman Ann Kilty. "The funding has shifted and it shifted last year to support K-12. At this point, we still have the ESL and the high school diplomas, the core programs are intact. If Sacramento cuts K-12 again, all bets are off."

Gov. Jerry Brown promised to maintain funding for K-12, but his proposal largely hinges on a proposed extension of some taxes, which would need to be put to the voters after the Legislature approves the plan.

Although no cuts are being proposed yet, the Salinas Union High School District is still reeling

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from previous cuts, Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services Tim Vanolli said.

"It's like trying to fix the airplane as we're flying. We're trying to structurally fix our budget as we speak. It never ends," Vanolli said. "And what the governor is proposing, we're not sure it's going to happen anyway. It's a long wait between now and June."

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